This is a congregation on the move -- a happening place! Collectively, we are moving toward some ambitious goals. The goals are articulated in a strategic plan approved and affirmed by the congregation. With the adoption of the strategic plan, the congregation took a leap of faith. We have faith that the world is hungry for what we have to offer. We have a bold way of living our deepest human values: affirming the worth and dignity of all life while respecting the interdependent nature of our existence. The goals in the strategic plan are an expression of the desire to make what we have here available to more people.

Progress toward these goals is happening! The goals fall into four general areas: program, outreach, facilities, and finance.

Programs at UUCT are growing and expanding. Religious education classes for children and youth are outgrowing available space, and the need for volunteers expands as well – good problems to have! Adult faith development programs are engaging people in our church community through Covenant Circles, a women’s group and a men’s group, a Sunday speaker series, and classes and workshops that address personal, congregational, and global issues.

Outreach into the community beyond our walls is happening, bringing visibility and awareness of our liberal religious outlook to the greater Tucson area. We hosted an interfaith service back in October. We are working cooperatively with the UU Congregation of Northwest Tucson to offer Campus Ministry at the University of Arizona. There is an active group of Unitarian Universalist young adults in Tucson who are planning for affiliation with both of the Tucson congregations. Plans are afoot for active outreach to families, young adults, and the LGBT community. The Share the Plate Program is another way of reaching out to agencies in Tucson whose work aligns with our values.

Facilities are being stretched to maximum capacity. With outreach designed to bring even more people to our doors, the crunch will be even tighter. Two task forces are working on this issue, one developing a plan for improvement and expansion of our current church facilities, one looking at the possibility of offering two Sunday worship services. None of this is possible without financial support. This year, a new approach to fundraising is being implemented, moving from an annual pledge drive to a year-round stewardship campaign. The outside, independent audit of the church financial records came back with reassuring news. Your monetary contributions are being well managed. Good stewardship of church resources is happening. Your congregational leaders are dedicated to maintaining transparent structures of financial accountability, ensuring that your gifts and pledges are held with utmost care, worthy of the trust granted in the giving.

All this in the first six months of my ministry here with you! You all continue to amaze me with your dedication to shared goals. We have accomplished much together, which is cause for celebration.

This is a congregation on the move. I am honored to be serving with you as we move ever closer to realizing an even more vibrant, vigorous ministry at UUCT.

Yours in faith,

Diane
Task Force Update

Church consultants who study such things have made some interesting observations:

- A sanctuary that is more than 80% full imparts an implicit message that there is insufficient space for a newcomer to continue attending. The same concept applies to available parking spaces and fellowship space.

- A decision by a newcomer to return to a church is made in the first 11 minutes of being on campus.

- Newcomers need to make six meaningful personal contacts in the first six months to feel committed to the community.

The Strategic Plan 2007-2009 adopted by the congregation envisions a path of outreach, growth, and financial security for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson, and sets benchmarks for programming and financing to achieve these goals.

The Two Services Task Force initiated by the Board and Rev. Diane Dowgiert is investigating the many issues related to accommodating both the quality of the programs we have now AND the growth we want to achieve. A temporary move to two worship services could be a proactive approach, inter-related to the programming and the outreach necessary to grow UUCT into a larger liberal religious presence in the Tucson community.

A reactive approach to encourage growth addresses some of the space constraints UUCT is faced with. Attendance figures for Jan-Dec 2007 indicate the campus is “comfortably crowded” but not bursting at the seams on most Sunday mornings. If, however, attendance figures over the next four months indicate a consistent upward trend, space limitations will need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

The Task Force is committed to an open and inclusive investigative and decision-making process. The Strategic Plan presents our church community with some fairly complicated challenges as well as wonderful opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. There will be a variety of forums in which ALL will be “in conversation” about our future – staff, leadership, lay people, volunteers, children, youth, committees and programs. In the meantime, the Task Force will be submitting some early recommendations to the Finance Council and the Board in late January in order to meet budget development deadlines.

Are there some simple, no-cost, changes in how we use church campus space in order to be welcoming of newcomers and old-timers alike? Yes!

- Leave aisle seats open so others don’t have to crawl over five people to find an empty seat.

- Utilize the unpaved parking area, leaving plenty of paved spaces open for newcomers, latecomers and the less able-bodied.

- Move away from the doorway into Goddard during coffee hour to greet each other and carry on conversations.

- Eat lunch on the patio when weather permits.

The Task Force and Reverend Diane welcome your input regarding these issues: Kathy McDaniel, John Roberts, John Schaefer, Roger Schrader, Linda Selsor, Judy Thompson, Frank Valdes.
First Friday: First Friday Parents Night Out is scheduled for the first Friday evening of the month. The next one is scheduled for Friday, February 2. It is held in the Awareness room from 6pm until 10pm and provided for a nominal fee. If you would like to reserve a space for your child, you must RSVP to Kathleen Hogue, 312-0441, by Thursday, January 4.

Outreach Meeting: The Outreach Goal #3 in the strategic plan adopted by the congregation last year states: “Our membership includes an increased of families with school aged children and young adults, and individuals of differing sexual orientation and ethnic backgrounds.” On Wednesday December 6th, a group of us met to brainstorm different ideas on making this a reality. Many excellent suggestions were given and creative ideas were exchanged. We are looking to create a task force that would help us to move forward with this plan. If you would like to be apart of this exciting step forward into our future, please call Mary Wiese at 514-5483.

Membership: I am often asked “How does one become a member?” There are three simple steps that I suggest on the path to membership. First, attend a Newcomers Orientation. This is the best way to become oriented with our church, its history and programs. The next one is scheduled for Sunday, February 11. Second, attend the short workshop “Connecting with UUCT” that presents opportunities for using one's personal gifts to become involved in the life of the church. The next one will be offered on Sunday, March 4. Third, attend a Newcomers Potluck, attend Movie Madness or sign up for a class offered by Adult Faith. Then if you are ready to commit to membership, I encourage you to participate in the Ceremony of Joining which is held during our regular Sunday service, 4 times a year. If you have any questions concerning membership, please fell free to contact me by phone, 514-5483 or by email, macbrude@cox.net.

Yours in Community Spirit,
Mary

Silent Auction Update

The UUCT congregation is very generous and the Auction Committee thanks all the members who have stepped forward with donations. To date, the Auction has received more than 75 contributions including many delicious and exciting dinners or parties, baskets of gourmet foods, theater tickets, guitar lessons, calligraphy, artworks, baked goods, many enticing gift certificates and much more! If you haven't quite decided what your donation will be, there is still time. Donation forms may be found in the church office during the week, at the Auction table in Goddard on Sundays or from the Acquisitions Committee member who called in December.

Parents, this is a fun event for children as well! In addition to free childcare, the children are treated to their own Children’s Auction in Blackwell room with pizza for dinner and some playtime. Contact Kathleen Hogue at 748-1551 for more details and to donate items for their auction.

Tickets for the Auction and dinner ($20) go on sale January 14 and volunteers are still needed to do decorations, prepare the fabulous dinner that Mary will plan and (everyone’s favorite) clean up!

If you have any questions, call or write: Anne Roberts 615-5186, anwelro@aol.com and Cynthia McDaniel 881-7209 cynr8@dakotacom.net.

Children’s Auction

The Children’s Auction this year will begin at 6:20 p.m. on February 26, 2007. It will be held in the Awareness Room. Children will be able to bid on a wide variety of items such as books, jewelry, toys, games, and gift items. As always this is a fun event. We are now taking donations of these special items. If you would like to donate, please contact Kathleen Hogue at 312-0441.
Taking our Principles Home - Being a UU Parent
By Rebecca Froom, DRE

Our 7 UU Principles have become a key tool for Unitarian Universalists as we each strive to develop and articulate our faith. Some of us quote from them when explaining our faith, others carry in our wallets that convenient little card provided by the UUA which lists the principles, and still others feel a connection to the framework the principles provide, without having memorized every stanza.

But how do we live our UU Principles? Looking beyond the words, how is this document, and all that it stands for, manifest in our lives? In our homes and in our relationships, are we truly approaching all those we meet with dignity? Are we able to encourage our children to spiritual growth or convey to them their place in a world community?

Sometimes we need a forum to unpack our UU faith, a space to exchange ideas for how to bring our UU Principles home. This spring the Adult Faith Development Program in collaboration with the Religious Education Program will offer such an opportunity to families through the course Being a UU Parent. This class will be offered once a month, January thru April, beginning January 21. Interested parents, grandparents and guardians can register at the Adult Faith Development Table in Goddard Hall during coffee hour.

Being a UU Parent serves a dual purpose of being a space for the faith development of parents as well as a space to explore how one’s home can nurture the faith development of the whole family. Each session includes theological exploration and discussion, focus on bringing religion into family life, and an opportunity for parents to raise and discuss childrearing questions that might be answered from a UU perspective. Being a UU Parent embodies many of our principles – calling on each participant to bring their own experience into the classroom as we each explore how to more fully bring truth and meaning, conscience and compassion into the rhythms, rituals and relationships of our homes and our families.

Religious Educator Sophia Lyon Fahs once said, “Life is religious whenever we make it so.” Our principles give us tools to make this quotation true, and our spiritual family here at UUCT gives us the space and support for us to take these principles home.

RE Spring Semester Begins
By Peggy Smith, RE Council member

This month, UUCT religious education classes begin the Spring Semester. Our children will be focusing this term on the 7 UU Principles. Each month the classes will explore two of the principles: January - Principles 1 and 2, February - 3 and 6, March - 4 and 5, and in April the classes will explore Principle 7. At the end April and in early May the students will develop personal credos to close out the semester. Each month the children will participate in an exciting project day that relates to the principles for that month, in addition to the monthly Extended Family Worship.

The curricula selected are designed to be engaging, fun and meaningful for the students so that they are free to explore their own understanding of what UU and the 7 Principles means to them.

The early childhood class for children in preschool thru first grade will be learning with Spirit Play, an exciting new curriculum using the Montessori methods. Grades 2 and 3 will be learning with A Spirit of Adventure, lessons designed to be active and engaging. The 4th and 5th grades will learn from lessons about what We Believe, which will challenge them to explore their beliefs about themselves and the world around them. The middle school group will choose their class lessons from Traditions with a Wink.

The Religious Education teaching is done by teams so that each volunteer is in the classroom only 2 days a month. The curriculum lesson plan, classroom materials and support are all provided to the lead teacher and assistant each Sunday. The RE Council and Staff would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the Fall Semester volunteers and to those who will be with our children this semester as they explore the Unitarian Universalist 7 Principles.

[Footnote]
For questions about the curricula, or to volunteer to help with the RE classes, please contact RE Director Rebecca Froom.
I arrived safely in Chicago on New Years Day and I am getting settled in the apartment with my roommates, Karla Brockie (Director of Religious Education at the NW Congregation) and Anne Barker (from Saskatchewan, Canada). We are meeting with our academic advisors this week. We also have Convocation, which is a special conference this time called “Catalyst for Change”, on antiracism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism.

Classes begin January 8 when I will have a week of “Creating Quality Worship in Congregations”. Expect to experience things I learn there during our Extended Family Worship services. Following that I have a course on governance entitled “Putting First Things First”. I am excited to compare this learning with our experience of policy governance. I look forward to seeing you all on January 8.

Today (Jan 2) was 47 degrees, sunny and dry. Please send positive thoughts that this wonderful weather continues! You may continue to email me at LMcHutch@cox.net as I can pick up my mail in Chicago. All the best for the New Year,

Lisa

Upcoming Worship Services in January

Sunday, January 14
“A Legacy of Hope”
“We shall hew out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope” — Martin Luther King, Jr. These words are a poignant reminder of the legacy of hope Martin Luther King, Jr. left us. The work he began is not done. It is now ours, carrying the stone of hope forward.
   Leader: Rev. Diane Dowgiert
   Music: Front Porch and Agnes Paulsen

Sunday, January 21
“The Comfort of Religion”
It has been two years since we delighted in Lyman Grover’s last sermon “on being a small c christian” which prompted heavy sales of the taped recording. This time he will explore the probability of a common bond with all religions, most of which profess to have God-given religious truths. Because we don’t and if we are more than just a social club for liberals, what does the UU religion offer to answer the three universal questions: “Where did I come from?”, “Where am I going?”, and “Why am I here?”. His answer, and more, will be presented with his usual doses of logic and wry humor to stimulate our thinking.
   Leader: Lyman Grover
   Music: Anne Roberts

Sunday, January 28
All Music Sunday
The morning worship service will be all music furnished by Desert Chorale, Family Singers, Brian Moon and Agnes Paulsen.

Tapes are made of each week’s sermon. Copies can be purchased through the church office for only $3 per copy. Fill out a form (Jean’s desk) and turn it in to April-Lynne Fowler. Tapes are ready the following Sunday.
Update on Lunitarian Weekend Plans for 2007

Attention, Lunitarians! Many of you were dismayed to learn that Playa Elegante is no longer available for camping. Progress dictates that all along the beaches RV parks are being sold to build condos. But there may be other ways to keep up our long-standing tradition. John and Margaret Fleming, members of the UU Congregation of NW Tucson, are REALTORS® in Tucson and are also owners of a real estate company in Puerto Peñasco (Rocky Point). They specialize in marketing and developing beach front properties all along the coast.

Many of these will soon be easier to get to because of the new highway being built. It has been suggested that interested parties might form a corporation to buy land for an RV park, or perhaps enter into a joint venture with one of the cooperatives (ejidos). The latter would be a more socially responsible project, since our investment could help the co-op owners create a money-making enterprise for themselves which would also benefit us. There are a lot of details that would have to be worked out, but at the moment we are trying to see if there is enough interest to pursue such a project.

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Susan Manker-Seale (susanm-s2@msn.com or 520-877-8961) OR Margaret Fleming (margefleming@earthlink.net) OR John Fleming (elfuturo@earthlink.net, 520-888-7059).

Update on Food Bank

During the year of 2006 the church office gave away 181 food bags to needy families who came to the office requesting help. Thanks to all who gave so generously at the Christmas eve service to keep this program viable.

Tape Program

During the year of 2006 a total of 365 tapes/CDs were made. 121 were sold to the general public at a rate of $3 each making a profit of $363 which will keep this program able to continue producing tapes/CDs for another year. The balance of the tapes made were for staff members.

Help Choose the Books for the Next Six Months

The Book Club meets the third Thursday of every month in Awareness at 7:00 P.M. For more information one may contact Cheryl Mennel at 760-4915 or at Cand1_Mennel@msn.com. The books for the next 6 months will be chosen in January, a good time to join the Book Club so that one may assist in the selection. One needs to have read the book, know the number of pages, the name of the book, the author, and the number of books in the library, as well as whether the book is available in paperback. The book club meets on the 18th not the 19th. Sorry about being confused about the date before.

January 18, 2006 Fates Worse Than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s by Kurt Vonnegut, in which Vonnegut discusses topics such as ecology and the fundamentalist right, as well as his life in the 1980s. 5 copies in the library. In PB. Please stress the “s” in the word “fates” and give the subtitle, “An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s” if placing on reserve by phone. If the person who answered the phone tells you there is no such book at the library, it is then time to ask to speak to the librarian. It is best to place this particular book on reserve by going online to the PCPL (Pima County Public Library), as it is so easy to confuse it with other books.
Music Notes ♬♬

"Some people come into our lives, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same."

Franz Schubert

As we begin 2007, I like to look back on 2006 and think about the people who have left footprints in my life. I appreciate the singers whose footsteps bring them to Desert Chorale and Family Singers rehearsals each week. And to you who listen to our musical renditions, I offer a thanks as well. It's a two-way street and we need each other. My New Year's wish is that our music journey in 2007 will be a happy and enriching one for us all.

Future special musical events:

Saturday, January 20 – Chili dinner furnished by Front Porch with proceeds to go into the church’s operating funds. The dinner will be at 6:00 p.m. followed by the program by Front Porch and Friends. Tickets are $15 for adults and $5 for children under 12 and will be on sale after church on January 14 or available during weekdays in the church office from 9 to 4. Please buy your tickets early so the cooks will know how much food to prepare.


Sunday, February 11 – Jazz concert by David Prouty at 4:00 p.m. Freewill Offering.

Saturday, March 3rd - A Classic Evening at 7:30 featuring Harp Fusion from the University of Arizona. Tickets will go on sale in February.

Agnes Paulsen
Minister of Music

Hikers Hike Seven Falls

By Chris Wallace

UUCT Hikers will hike to Seven Falls in Bear Canyon on Saturday, January 27. We will hike in from the end of Bear Canyon Road. Round trip is approximately 6.4 miles. If you have never been to Seven Falls or even if you have, you are in for a treat of majestic waterfalls, pools, smooth rocks and high canyon walls. Bring a lunch and plenty to drink. Meet at the church parking lot at 9:00 a.m. Eastsiders can meet us at 9:25 a.m. in front of Pizza Hut at Catalina Highway and Tanque Verde Road. If you have questions, please call Chris Wallace at 326-6043.

Birthday Lunch Planned

On Sunday, January 21 our Sunday Together Lunch will be celebrating your birthday whatever month it is in. Tables will be set up for people to eat together who have the same birthday month in common. This is a great way to celebrate your birthday early. There will be the usual luncheon item for only $5 but you will eat it with people who celebrate the same birthday month as you do. What a way to celebrate! Come and plan to stay for lunch and learn who else has their birthday in the same month as you.

Interested in joining the Church?

If you have been interested in joining this church and have not done so yet, we are glad to let you know that Sunday, January 14, during our morning worship time there will be an opportunity for you to sign the membership book. Please let Mary Wiese (macbrude@cox.net or 748-1551, ext. 16) know if you want to be a part of this event.

Furnish her with a brief statement about yourself so that she can introduce you to the congregation. This statement will be read by her during the worship service.

Alliance News

On Dec. 12, we enjoyed our Christmas potluck and our traditional Christmas performance by the Sahuaro High School Singers. We will have no meeting in January. On Feb. 13, we will have our Valentine potluck and a talk by the director of the Tucson Pops Orchestra, Laszlo Veres. More information to come.

Marcia Schenck
MISSION STATEMENT

This sacred community is rooted in our search for meaning, guided by personal experience, diverse religious traditions, and scientific discovery. We are varied as the blooms in the Sonoran Desert, yet draw strength from one another. Envisioning a world where justice and compassion cross all borders, we pledge energy and resources to transform ourselves, our community, and the world around us.

Upcoming Church Events in January

14 - Speaker Series: Shay Solomon, local author, 12:15 p.m. Awareness
14 - Artist of the Month Gallery Reception, 12:15 p.m., Holland
14 - Stewardship Training, 12:15 p.m., Goddard Hall
14 - Spirit Play Orientation, 12:15 p.m., Servetus
18 - Book Club, 7:00 p.m., Awareness
20 - Front Porch Dinner & Concert, 6:00 p.m., Goddard/Holland
21 - Covenant Circle, 12:15 p.m., Servetus
21 - Parent Class, 12:15 p.m., Awareness
25 - Homeless Hospitality, 4:00 p.m., Goddard Hall (overnight)
26 - Women’s Circle, 6:30 p.m., Awareness
28 - Congregational Meeting, 12:15 p.m. Holland